12/27/71

Dear Js (and HR),

I take time from working on the intro to PM to make a note for TIGER, in case I will want to use it there, which is not certain, and so if I do I will not have forgotten, to note that today's news about the renewed and extended air attacks on NVN are explained with the unoriginality I once told you characterizes everything Nixon does. (Wish I were a shrink! He copies unimaginatively and irresponsibly, no more.)

The explanation of this renewed aggression, an inconceivable thing if he is serious about getting out, is almost word-for-word from the past. You may remember that LBJ used exactly this "explanation", for all the world as though it were legal and proper for <u>any</u> of our aviation to be in any other country and, even were this to be the case, if it were possible to make the distinction from the ground. (Matter of fact, we have converted old transports, originally unarmed, into the planes with the greatest bullet-capacity in history!)

What you may not know if you haven't read The Pentagon Papers is that this is the excuse cooked up months before the Tonkin Gulf provocation was contrived, to explain what was then being pressed upon LBJ. In other words, it hadn't happened, we were going to see to it that it did happen, and when it did, we had this prefabricated justification - six- eight months in advance.

What I'll be interested in seeing is if the other side uses this as reason to leave Paris. I think they should, saying they'll return when there has been a guarantee made openly and publicly that this will not be repeated. Nixon and his gang have to be starting the backing out of their getting out. The other side would be foolish to be part of his/their scheming and would be wise to confront us with the stark reality as fast as possible, and as long as possible before the primaries.

The marvelously-appropriate word used in the papers that are the basis of The Pentagon Papers is "scenario". If you haven't read them, if you start with the Tonkin part you'll get the whole current script.

Unless pressure forces a reversal. These air strikes are usually the only thing our diplomacy and military can think of whenthey face some hidden crisis, like a vassal government in acute distress or about to fall, serious and hidden military reverses, and what they always face, real frustration.

They haven't yet learned what fails, so they repeat all the failures religiously. Bombs for beads, that's the only difference.

Nor have they learned that they can't succeed, which means still more furstration.

Best, HW